

in this period. They had had a system of theology in the works of their founder—those works had been hunted out and burnt; they had founded schools<sup>1</sup>—those schools had been broken up. Even to study the Bible was for them a dangerous offence, though they braved that danger. Persecution had forced them to become an unlearned body. It is not for the Catholic Church which deprived them of their literature to scoff at the Lollards as illiterate.

For the rest, we find that the opinions of the sect have become on the whole more violent and harsh than those of the early Wycliffites. This was the inevitable result of the prolonged death-struggle with the pitiless organisation of Catholicism, whose every aspect was becoming more and more odious to its victims. Many, if not most, of these later Lollards had passed beyond the limited heresy of Consubstantiation, which had satisfied their predecessors, and spoke with increasing scorn and disgust of the rites which then constituted religion.<sup>2</sup>

The strength of revived Lollardry is displayed in the Registers of the persecuting Bishops, which afford us "evidence of various Lollard congregations between 1490 and 1521, each as large as that which the Bishop of Norwich had broken up at Beccles in 1431, congregations who studied Wycliffe's 'Wicket,'<sup>7</sup> and who could trace back their foundation to the beginning or middle of the fifteenth century. At Newbury in Berkshire and Amersham in Buckinghamshire there had been such societies in continuous existence for sixty or seventy years. A preacher of that district named Thomas Man, before going to the stake in 1518, told his judges that he believed he had converted seven hundred persons in the course of his life. Uxbridge and Henley had heretic congregations, in close communication with those of Norfolk and Suffolk, several years before Luther appeared on the stage. In 1521 a great attack was made on the Buckinghamshire and Berkshire Lollards by the Bishop of Lincoln, and on those of Essex and Middlesex by the Bishop of London. Accusations were heard against hundreds of persons, scores were forced to recant, and at least six were

<sup>1</sup> *Rot. ParZ.*, iii. 466; *Poxe*, iii. 585. « See *Foxe*, iv. 221-40, *passim*.